Management education and training for librarians in Scotland

by

Ian M. Johnson,
Head of the School of Librarianship and Information Studies,

C. Stuart Hannabuss,
Lecturer in the School of Librarianship and Information Studies,

and

David M. Wildgoose,
Senior Lecturer in the Business School,

The Robert Gordon Institute of Technology,
Schoolhill,
Aberdeen AB9 2TQ
Scotland,
UK.

Abstract

This paper is a report on research into management education and training for librarians, which was initiated and funded by the Library and Information Services Committee (Scotland) [LISC(S)]. It outlines the origin of the proposal in the current debate about management education in the United Kingdom (UK), and in the growing concern to ensure that librarians' managerial abilities are fully developed. It provides background material on management education in Scotland, and on the provision of short courses in management for librarians in the UK.

A survey of Heads of library and information services and the managers who report to them was undertaken in early 1991 to identify the management competences required by librarians. The resources available for staff development were investigated, as were the relative priorities attached to management development compared with general professional development. The review found that managerial development has clearly been identified as organisationally or personally important by some librarians. However, it appeared that the overall perception of librarians as managers is still low. There was a very considerable diversity in support for management development in Scottish libraries. The review concluded that, at the moment there does not appear to be a basis for a programme of management education and training specifically for librarians. The increase in financial allocations required to sustain such a programme would be unrealistic in present circumstances, and librarians should make more use of alternative, in-service methods of management development.

The Changing Face of Library Management

Managers are people who are responsible for the development and delivery of products and services, and for the human and material resources required to fulfil that purpose. By this definition, all librarians are managers from the moment that they commence their professional careers. They work in a specialist environment in which they also practice their profession, and the level of their responsibilities varies, but they cannot fulfil their professional aims and objectives unless they also manage effectively the resources at their disposal. A recent document issued by the Library Association(1), intended to outline to employers what librarians do, describes their work in a way explicitly and implicitly emphasises the managerial responsibilities.

The demands on the librarians managerial abilities have grown noticeably greater in recent years. Information sources are much more complex than they were. In addition to an enormous growth in the publication of printed materials, the emergence of electronic information has added a new dimension. Electronic sources offer ready and rapid access to information, but they raise financial issues for the library manager in meeting the charges for information, and in making the investment in equipment. All forms of automation raise personnel management issues, not least that of re-training staff.

Libraries do not operate in isolation. They all exist within the framework of some larger organisation and exist to serve its corporate aims. The information explosion has raised the contribution which libraries can potentially make to the achievement of those corporate objectives, and a greater emphasis on the marketing of library services is necessary to enhance their effectiveness.

Nor are libraries isolated from the philosophy which currently permeates business and government - effectiveness, efficiency, and enterprise. These represent a threat to badly managed library services, and challenge the library manager to plan and develop relevant services.

The occupational environment for librarians has also changed. Many large organisations are amalgamating functions, partly in search of economies. Their main aim, however, is to create a greater cohesion and synergy in the achievement of corporate aims. Libraries have been affected by this kind of reorganisation in local government, academic institutions, the health service, and business. These new, enlarged units present new challenges for library managers who have a broad vision of the corporate aims, and a perspective which incorporates an understanding of the purpose and activities of the services with which the library has been associated. Personal ambition, and proven managerial abilities, offer the librarian new career opportunities in a larger unit.

The demand for information and for expertise in its retrieval has led to the establishment of libraries where none previously existed (e.g. in many schools, hospitals, professional practices and commercial companies). Initially, employers were uncertain about the potential contribution of these libraries to the achievement of corporate objectives. This depressed the salary levels of many of these new posts to the point where they attracted only relatively recently qualified librarians. Thus many librarians early in their career became Heads of services. They had the range and level if not the size of responsibilities of senior managers in the older established large library services.

National Developments in Management Education

In recent years there has been considerable discussion about the extent and quality of management training and education in the UK. Representatives of both industry and government have called for a fresh approach. Particular attention has been focused on the training and education of those entering managerial posts and the relationship between training at that initial level and subsequent development.

Following the publication in 1987 of the reports by Handy(2), and by Constable and McCormick(3), a national debate on management education and training has ensued. This debate has revolved around the work of the National Forum for Management Education and Development (NFMED) which launched, in 1988, the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) to promote the concept of a coherent structure of educational qualifications for managers. Considerable work has also been done in identifying core competences for managers at different levels. The MCI proposals(4) are intended to make education and development of those in junior management positions less theoretical and more closely related to the demands of managerial jobs, but some controversy surrounds the problem of translating the competence statements into educational programmes.

Education and training for library management

The growing complexity of library and information services has focussed increasing attention on their management during the last 20 years. The Library Management Research Unit was established at Cambridge in 1969 to provide a focal point for the investigation of problems in university library management. The Unit was subsequently relocated at Loughborough University, where it was renamed the Centre for Library and Information Management (CLAIM) in 1979, and had its scope broadened to include all kinds of libraries and information centres. During
the last ten years of its life, its overall aim was: "to improve the effectiveness of services in the field through the provision of information, investigation, continuing education and consultancy services…" (5)

Financial support for CLAIM was reduced in the 1980s by the British Library Research and Development Department, and finally ceased in 1987. Nonetheless, interest in the post-qualification training of librarians had increased. In the mid-1970s the Library Association initiated a research project to investigate the adequacy of management training for librarians. This identified a widely perceived need for management training, and recommended the establishment of a regular pattern of courses on certain topics.(6) There was, however, no successful attempt to implement these recommendations.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s much debate and development took place within the Schools of Librarianship as they re-orientated their courses from 'library administration' to 'library management' to meet the needs of a changing job market.(7) Employment data suggests that newly qualified professional librarians are now employed in equal proportions in public library systems and in small specialist libraries. The proportion employed in these special libraries as their first job is growing, and there is evidence of a marked movement of staff from public libraries to special libraries within the first five years of their careers. The educational changes were intended to prepare librarians to be managers of small units in large organisations, and the underlying principles are as relevant in small units within public libraries as within, say, commercial organisations. However, there is regular research evidence of low levels of job satisfaction amongst professionally qualified staff in libraries. This suggests that some established library services may not have responded to these

educational changes by reviewing the managerial responsibilities of professionally qualified librarians in the lower levels of their hierarchies.

Some Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies developed post-qualification Masters Degrees with a strong bias towards management. However, in the late 1980s Ritchie demonstrated that these attracted only one in four of librarians studying for advanced qualifications in management, and that most of the rest were taking courses leading to more generally recognised management qualifications.(8)

Attempts at collaboration between Schools of Librarianship and Business Schools to tailor management qualification courses to the needs of library managers have been few in number.

In the early 1980s Ealing Technical College offered the Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) Course with an option in Library Management, but this has been discontinued. There were no similarly oriented courses developed until 1989 when Sheffield University began to offer a programme in Information Management leading to the Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA). In 1991 Heriot Watt University Business School and Moray House College (both in Edinburgh) announced the establishment of a new jointly taught MBA in Arts Administration, including an elective in Library Management. This arose from an investigation into the training needs of arts administrators in Scotland. Details of the MBA programme and the Library Management course have yet to be published, and arrangements for the tuition of the course have not yet been finalised. However, it seems that the Library Management option will be targeted at arts administrators who have no previous experience of library management to broaden their capabilities.

Towards the end of the decade attention began to focus more on the needs of top managers in libraries. During the late 1980s the Local Government Training Board provided some input into training for public library management, and were critical of the patchy nature of management training, even for chief librarians.(9) In 1988/89 a further initiative was funded jointly by International Computers Limited and the Office of Arts and Libraries under the government's Public Libraries Development Incentive Scheme. Funding was awarded to the London and South Eastern Library Region (LASER) to co-ordinate a survey of staff training needs in a number of public library systems in its area. The study(10) concluded that training is needed in many areas of library work, but that in the first instance priority should be given to management training and to providing library staff with the skills which they need to deliver training. However, the Office of Arts and Libraries declined to award further funding for 1989/90 to follow up the proposals.

More recently, Robert Hayes, the former Dean of the School of Librarianship at the University of California at Los Angeles undertook a study of senior management training needs in all kinds of libraries in Britain whilst based at Loughborough University as a visiting professor.(11) This was little more than an evaluation of reaction to proposals to establish an American style "Senior Fellows" programme for selected top managers and "high fliers". This has proved a controversial proposal, but the British Library's Research and Development Department nonetheless invited tenders for the organisation and presentation of such a course. The contract has been awarded to a consortium of libraries, educational institutions and consultants in Leicestershire.

Librarians and continuing education

During the last twenty years, a variety in management.(8) Interestingly, Ritchie found the highest participation rate amongst the 30-40 year olds, whom one might expect to be in middle management.

Courses leading to advanced qualifications in librarianship and library management have generally enjoyed only a short period of success before enrolments have declined. The most recent initiative, a distance learning programme established by the University College of Wales Aberystwyth in 1985/86 does seem to be maintaining its enrolment target of c.30 students each year. Nonetheless, because of changes in personnel and a shift in the market, the original single focus on management subjects has been diluted by the introduction of an option in library work with young people.

Short course provision for librarians has grown enormously in recent years, and there are now perhaps more than 500 events being organised each year.(12) In-service training in libraries has also grown, and now accounts for perhaps 40% of all training activity.(13) Participation in management training appears to account for about 25% of in-service and external short course activity.

The growth of in-service training reflects not only an increased appreciation of organization-specific activity, but also budgetary restraints. Bird identified the low level of financial provision for staff development in public libraries!5, which averaged GBP 10-15 per annum per member of staff in 1985. In MacDougall's study of all kinds of library, time and financial constraints were cited as the major reasons for non-participation in continuing education.(12)

Over 150 organisations are involved in providing continuing education for librarians.(15) According to an analysis of the "Professional Calendar", only about 2% of short courses are provided by the Schools of Librarianship.(16) MacDougall's analysis of participation confirms this and moreover indicates that only a further 4% of short courses are provided by other educational institutions.(12)

Notable among the providers in recent years have been the professional associations (including latterly the Scottish Library Association), and cooperatives such as the Central ScotlandTraining Group (established in 1976) and the Scottish Academic Libraries Training Group (1985). The latter has arranged management courses each year since it was established, and has conducted its own survey of management training needs in 1990, and the results will influence the contents of its courses in the next few years. The former has been relatively inactive because of the establishment of the academic libraries group and the growth of in-house training units in Local Authorities, but seems to be attempting a revival.

Aims and objectives of the review

Scotland accounts for about one third of the land area of the UK, but only about 10% of the population. Its geography, history, politics, economic structure, and culture have created institutions which are separate from those of England and Wales, and which are distinctly different in their value judgments. LISC(S) shared the general concern about the managerial development of librarians, and was aware of the debate provoked by the Hayes' review. LISC(S), however, took the view that it was important to develop the managerial abilities of all library staff, and not just a small, elite cadre. During the summer of 1990, a number of organisations were invited to tender proposals for a review of management education and

training for librarians in Scotland. The contract was awarded to a team from the Faculty of Management of The Robert Gordon Institute of Technology (RGIT), Aberdeen, comprising two staff from the School of Librarianship and Information Studies, and one from the Business School. The work was carried out between October 1990 and March 1991.

The aim of the review, prescribed by LISC(S), was to investigate the need for the provision of management education for mid-career professional librarians in all types of library, concentrating on middle and senior management levels. The specified objectives were to:

- identify management competences and skills necessary at different career levels, relating these to existing and likely future job needs.

- review existing provision - examine what is available and what can be provided by external agencies, e.g. MBA, DMS programmes, Local Government Unit, Industrial Society, etc.

- study the profession's perceptions of provision, and the pattern of uptake.

- identify gaps in existing provision.

- make recommendations as to future provision, and propose a development plan.

Management education in Scotland

A review of the management courses offered by educational institutions in Scotland was undertaken by circulating a request for information to all the universities, and the non-specialist Central Institutions and Colleges of Further Education and by examining directories of courses.

It was noted that increasingly the courses in Colleges of Further Education are being brought into line with the MCI Certificate, the first level of management qualification, and/or will be available in modular form, enabling librarians to participate in selected units which meet particular needs.

Almost all librarians in the UK are now university graduates, and more appropriate levels of formal qualification for middle and senior managers are the DMS and the MBA. These are available on a part-time mode in all the major population centres, and also in distance learning modes. None of the courses in Scotland yet offer specific units for library managers, but the integral projects and dissertations offer frequent opportunities to apply management principles to the workplace.

In addition there are a number of part-time post-graduate or post-experience courses available in Scotland specialising in aspects of management, particularly human resources management and marketing, which may be relevant to some aspects of library management.

Distance learning has become an increasingly popular medium for continuing education, and it was noted that a number of Scottish librarians are studying management through a distance learning mode, particularly the Masters degree programme offered by the Department of Information and Library Studies, University College of Wales Aberystwyth.

It should also be noted that most of the educational institutions in Scotland which offer management courses also offer short courses in particular management topics. Some are

open to any applicant, others are available to any client organisation, and it was claimed that they can be tailored to meet specific needs. In the public library sector, the establishment of the Scottish Local Government Management Unit at the Strathclyde Business School, with support from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, should be noted. The Unit operates on a cost-recovery basis in providing courses for individual local authority departments, and aims to develop training expertise in specific fields which can be applied in all local authorities. It is currently in discussions with one district public library service in response to an approach for management development training for the library staff.

Short courses for librarians in Scotland

An analysis was made of the short courses (including meetings, conferences, etc) held in the UK in the first six months of 1990. This was based on the calendars of events published in *"Scottish Libraries"*, the *"Library Association Record", "Aslib Information", "Inform"* (Institute of Information Scientists), and the *"Professional Calendar"* compiled and published by the Library of the Department of Information and Library Studies, University College of Wales Aberystwyth. Further information was provided by the Scottish Library Association (compilers of "Hot line", a listing of professional meetings in Scotland), the Central Scotland Training Group and the Scottish Academic Libraries Training Group.

According to these sources there were 1,185 relevant events scheduled in January-June 1990, of which 99 (8%) were to be held in Scotland. Closer examination suggested that perhaps 225 were on topics relevant to management development, of which 18 (7%) were to be held in Scotland. It was not possible from the information available to assess the level at which most of the courses were presented.

There were a number of occasions when two or more events were scheduled on the same day in Scotland. Although these would not necessarily attract identical audiences, they might attract the interest of staff from the same libraries, possibly presenting managers with decisions about priorities for e.g. covering the duties of staff who wished to attend. Use of the Scottish Library Association "Hotline" by event organisers could help to minimise these problems, but the availability of speakers, meeting rooms, etc. will always be the final arbiter in fixing dates for events.

There was no evidence that any particular organisation took responsibility for regularly arranging management development activities.

In many cases, publicity for an event appeared in the professional press only a few weeks before the event actually took place. Publicity for the events in Scotland were scattered in a number of sources. "*Scottish Libraries"* listed only 21 of the 99 events. "Hotline" listed 34. The *"Library Association Record"* listed 26. The *"Professional Calendar"* included the largest number (51) but these were almost entirely events which had been organised on a national UK basis. It omitted many events arranged locally in Scotland.

Support for management development

Identification of management competences required by librarians was attempted in questionnaires sent in early 1991 to Heads of library and information services and to managers who report to them. A basis for consultation was a much simplified version of the Occupational Standards for Managers which have been produced as part of the Management Charter Initiative.

The profession's perception of provision and the pattern of participation was elicited in the same enquiry. Information was also elicited on resources available for staff development, and the relative priorities attached to management as compared with general professional development.

The survey was based on a representative sample of 50 of the libraries and information centres listed in the directory of Scottish Library and information resources. Of the 100 questionnaires distributed, some 60 were completed.

Managers in any organisation are those whose efforts are concentrated on leadership and organisation. The definition of the mid-career middle or senior manager proved to be beyond a generally acceptable definition. Middle and senior managers were mainly defined by their Heads of service on the basis of their hierarchical position or salary grade, or by the level and breadth of their responsibilities for staff, budgets and services. However, some Heads employed a definition which encompassed all professional staff. Defining "mid-career" proved as difficult. Again the Heads were asked to provide their own definition, and again there was a variety of responses. Definitions pointed to age (35 to 45 was mentioned by several respondents) and to experience (3 to 25 years). All those in promoted posts were also mentioned, one respondent specifically referred to staff whose career within the organisation had reached its ceiling. Notwithstanding the problems of definition, there appear to be at least 700 professionally qualified librarians in Scotland whose Heads of service would place them in the proscribed category. As a potential audience for management education and training this is not an insignificant number.

The majority of managers reported that they had received no management training prior to their appointment as middle managers, nor any prior to their further promotion to senior management. Most senior managers have received some management training since their appointment at that level.

Provision made for staff development can be significantly influenced by the assignation of responsibility for training, and by the extent to which positive steps are taken to identify and respond to training needs. Responsibility for organisation and initiating training has been clearly assigned in most libraries, but there appear to be some Scottish libraries where this vital responsibility has been neglected.

A systematic analysis of the needs for job training and individual development can provide an objective assessment of what is required to enable the library service to meet its agreed objectives, and puts training in its proper place in the priorities for financial allocations. It was encouraging to note that needs analysis is increasingly practised, but there was clearly scope for its more widespread adoption.

Training budgets appear low in comparison with the costs of training, except in some academic institutions and commercial companies where relevant staff development tends to be comparatively well supported. However, freeing staff time to participate in training was seen as more significant barrier to management development.

In a significant proportion of library and information services, the budget for training was controlled outwith the library service, and could therefore be subject to organisational priorities which may differ from those of the library service. Whilst most libraries appear

reasonably free to take advantage of any appropriate training, some libraries appear to be severely constrained by institutional procedures and/or finance.

All managers recognised the need for expertise in managing people and in managing budgets. Priority training needs were identified in the areas of staff and budgetary management, planning, and automation. A mixture of action-learning and relevant short courses were seen as the appropriate training media to meet these needs.

The priority attached to managerial development of middle and senior managers tends to be seen by their Heads of services in a purely pragmatic light. They indicated that they support whatever is needed to contribute to the smooth and efficient operation of the library service. On the other hand, management development was seen by middle and senior managers as their highest priority.

It appears that in any one year about 2% of the middle-management of Scottish libraries (about 14 people) commence a programme of study leading to a formal qualification in management. Heads attitudes to different methods of management development suggest a somewhat piecemeal approach is taken to preparing middle and senior managers for their responsibilities. Most Heads appeared to have no appreciation of the need for individuals to undergo a comprehensive programme of management development. If they did appreciate it, they alleged that they were constrained by the available resources.

During the last year a wide variety of short courses in management topics were attended by librarians. However, staff from more than one third of the libraries responding to the survey did not take part in any management short courses during the year.

Heads of service were willing for their middle and senior managers to spend around 10 days each year on management development activities. Absences from the workplace of 2 consecutive days would be acceptable to them. Managers were generally prepared to devote 5-7 days to management development activities each year, and preferred courses of two or one day in duration. Managers were mostly willing to invest their own time in their management development, but most expected costs to be met by their employers.

The managers' preference was for training to be organised in Scotland, preferably in their own locality. Off the job training, with perhaps some combined element on the job, is their preference. Heads also felt that training in larger library systems could combine on the job activities with off the job training. For smaller libraries, only off the job training was viable. Training should be based in Scotland, in the Heads' view, preferably as close to the workplace as possible.

Business School lecturers are seen by Heads of services as those most likely to be able to provide the inputs required, possibly allied with external practitioners or lecturers from Schools of Librarianship to ensure the professional relevance of the content and presentation. Overall, managers also indicated that Business School lecturers were the most appropriate people to provide management training, but a wide variety of views were held, depending on their perception of who might be asked to do what.

There was a general feeling that current provision for middle and senior managers is poor, but improving. There appears to be some potential for educational institutions, the professional bodies, and the training co-operatives to analyse the markets needs more effectively. More attention also needs to be given to promoting what is available.

Persuading employers of the importance of management development and developing their understanding of how managers could best be developed was also identified as an issue to be addressed.

Summary and conclusions

Librarians are increasingly recognising that they are indeed managers in a professional/technical environment. It was encouraging to see the interest being taken in management by some library managers. Managerial development has clearly been identified as organisationally or personally important by a number of librarians. However, it appeared that the overall perception of librarians as managers is still low, amongst librarians almost as much as amongst their employers. It is particularly important to raise employers' perceptions of librarians as managers, and to encourage them to provide more support for appropriate management development. This will require collaboration with all those responsible for librarians' training to review librarians' career development in their sectors and to identify the consequential training needs.

The development of any librarian as a manager begins with initial professional education and is enhanced by experience, training and by continuing education throughout a career. Management development should not be deferred until staff are in mid-career or have been promoted. It is important that newly qualified professional librarians should begin to build on the foundations of management education in their qualification course at an early stage in their career, and that throughout their careers this should be reinforced to raise their perceptions of themselves as managers. The provision for librarians' management development in the early post-qualification years needs to be reviewed.

Librarians in mid-career, regardless of their position in a hierarchy, represent a major reserve of experience and an investment in professional training which must be capitalised to maintain the momentum of the organisation. They may also be at a watershed in their professional life, having reached a plateau in the hierarchy from which they could progress or where they could stagnate. Management development is clearly the key to progress and a challenge to stagnation.

The placing of librarians work in the broader context of information management presents opportunities for the personally ambitious librarian with developed managerial abilities. A strategic view of the advantages for the profession suggests a need to support those who could be aspiring to such levels.

There is a very considerable diversity in support for management development in Scottish libraries, with notable variations between the different sectors of library service and within each sector. It is encouraging to note that some employers are providing more substantial support for staff development. However, the increase in financial allocations which others would need to make to raise their expenditure levels on staff development to match best practice, let alone what might be considered ideal, is such that in present circumstances it would be unrealistic to expect rapid and significant improvement. The diversity in financial support (and in attitudes) is so great that at the moment, regrettably, there does not appear to be a sufficiently strong basis for a unified programme of management education and training specifically for librarians which meets the needs of all the various sectors.

The comprehensive development of management skills may for some staff be best accomplished through a formal course of study leading to a recognised management

qualification. In due course, the demand for formal courses which embody general management principles in the context of library and information management may be sufficiently strong to make such a course viable. At present this does not appear to be the case, and librarians in Scotland must be encouraged to take more advantage of the existing provision of Business School courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications in management, especially the DMS and MBA.

The present provision for management training in terms of short courses in Scotland is both underdeveloped and uncoordinated. There appears to be a need:

- to conduct an annual survey of training needs in Scotland, to identify common priorities for professional and managerial development. (This would enable the training agencies to prepare and publicise their plans for courses to be held in the following year, would remind employers to regularly assess the training needs of their staff, and would enable them to earmark funding for courses which they could be reasonably sure of taking place.)

- to gather information about the proposed activities of the major speculative providers of open events (e.g. LA groups, IIS, the Business Schools, etc.), to ensure more effective and more advance publicity for events, and to attempt to co-ordinate these activities.

- to encourage the establishment of more training co-operatives.

- to encourage the development of self-help, special interest groups in the growing special library sector.

- to encourage the implementation of alternative means of management development such as in-service coaching and counselling, and planned work experience (teamwork, problem solving, etc.).

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